TWO YEARS IN A GROWING PRAYER MEETING

BY REV. W. F. LLOYD, D.D.

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BY REV. W. F. LLOYD, D.D.

Of the Louisville Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South

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FOREWORD.

This little book is respectfully commended to the younger men in the pastorate into whose hands it may fall. My reasons for writing are set forth in the first chapter—"My Apology." The chapter, "Feeling My Way for Three Months," will perhaps prove the least interesting part of the book. Beginning with that chapter, the book is a record of actual experiences, topics, Scripture lessons, and difficulties during two years, showing how hindrances were encountered and overcome, and how the prayer meeting steadily grew. For this reason, this particular chapter should not be omitted by the reader. The later chapters record and amplify a class of topics and Scripture lessons which in my judgment should have a place in a normal prayer meeting.

The Author.

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TWO YEARS IN A GROWING PRAYER MEETING.

I.

My Apology.

Can anything new or of additional help be said about the prayer meeting? It seems like presumption, not to say folly, for any one to add a word on this subject, much less one who is unknown beyond a limited circle, and whose name is not sufficiently known to justify the expectation of an audience.

All this makes it painful to attempt to write on this subject; and but for an impression that has been growing for years that God has given me a little message to carry, and that he will find the audience whom he wishes to hear the message, I would not venture a word.

Modestly, I may say that God has given me some fair measure of success in building up and maintaining a prayer meeting. This has been the invariable rule in all my pastorates. I think he has led me to see the very great importance of the prayer meeting, and has given me some skill in drawing people to attend, and in the profitable conduct of such meetings. Then, as I have gotten many a valuable suggestion from others, is it not my duty to offer whatever I may have learned for the help of my younger brethren in the ministry?

This discussion of the prayer meeting will probably be different from others that have gone before. My thought has been that the best possible way to help young pastors in the conduct of their prayer meetings would be to give in detail the subjects, Scripture lessons, and outline of talks, through two years, just as they occurred week after week. In this method there will be seen not only the subjects used, but incidentally will appear the hindrances and difficulties that come up from time to time, as also how these things were overcome.

The subjects and details of discussions shown in these pages are not offered with the thought that any one will use them, or will desire to. They are simply given because they illustrate my ideas of the class of subjects that are appropriate for the prayer meeting, and in that way may be of some use to my younger brethren of the ministry.

In making this presentation I have selected the topics used in a certain pastorate of mine, the name of which I do not give. But the topics and Scriptures were all used in the order in which they occur.

When appointed to this particular pastorate, while inquiring of my predecessor of various matters connected with the charge, I said: "How are the prayer meetings attended?" He answered: "About a hundred." I immediately congratulated myself on the prospect. But alas! I suppose the brother had never counted. The people told me that the prayer meetings, during my pastorate, were more than double in attendance what they had formerly been, and yet only once or twice were there as many as one hundred

present. I have chosen this particular pastorate because it was the most difficult one that I have ever had in which to build and maintain a successful prayer meeting.

This weekly record of attendance and possibly some of the subjects and discussions will reveal to the reader the uphill work we had. Notwithstanding the difficulties, a good degree of success crowned our efforts. During the first six months of that pastorate the average attendance on prayer meeting was fifty, during the second six months it averaged sixty-seven, during the third half year it was seventy-one, while for the fourth it was seventy-five.

This may not seem a large attendance. That is true; but it is larger, perhaps, than found in nine-tenths of our Churches. Most pastors guess at the number in their congregations. What is more, they are not good guessers. By this guessing process congregations are generally estimated twice as large as when counted. I have made it a rule for years to count my prayer meeting congregation. This enables me to know whether we are gaining or decreasing in attendance, and prevents the false comfort which I would receive from an imaginary number, one-third or one-half of whom were not present.

II.

THE PREACHER'S ESTIMATE.

In what estimate does the pastor hold his own prayer meeting? The size and quality of this service will almost inevitably depend on its rank in his own mind. If he considers it as simply a routine service of the Church, to be attended once a week, like the officers of a fraternal insurance association have to hold a meeting at stated intervals to prevent forfeiture of the charter, he will most certainly have a poor prayer meeting. The pastor cannot impress other people with the value of something that he does not see himself.

On the other hand, if the prayer meeting bulks in the pastor's mind and heart, if he thinks about it, prays about it, talks about it in his pastoral visiting, frequently speaks of it in public—above all, if he really *feels* the need of it for himself and his people—then they will get a corresponding idea of its importance, and will begin to attend.

There are many things that have been said about the value of the prayer meeting that sound like mere platitudes to many pastors, and they get so tired of them that they refuse to read them or heed them. Nevertheless, those same platitudes are true; they are more than platitudes; they are the coinage of experience, the garnered wisdom of years, and he who disregards them simply shows his incapacity for rec-

ognizing and utilizing the most valuable service of his Church.

Some one has said that the prayer meeting is the thermometer of the Church, the heat register, by which you can tell how much of spiritual life is in the Church. This, of course, is true; but I believe it was Mr. Moody who gave what I consider a much better description of the prayer meeting. He said that it is the *furnace room* of the Church; not simply the place where the heat is measured, but where it is generated. This witness is true. The prayer meeting is down below every other service and society in the Church. If it is emphasized and made a success, the other services and societies in the Church will likely prosper; or if for certain reasons they do not all prosper, the vigorous prayer meeting will pull everything after it and sustain the other services and societies that would perhaps utterly collapse without this support. On the other hand, the Sunday morning preaching service may be well attended, and the societies of the Church may appear to be doing well so far as numbers and show are concerned; but if the prayer meeting is sickly, and lives only "at a poor dying rate," you may set it down that there will not be much permanence about the fair show of the other services of the Church.

A Church with a poor prayer meeting will soon have a diminishing congregation at the preaching of the word, the various societies among the women will languish, the Sunday school will sooner or later drag, and, though the people may not get a change in pastors, they will surely want it and feel its need. A

full and vigorous prayer meeting has such a fine effect upon every other service and society of the Church that a congregation does not have the heart to ask for a change of pastor, even though the one they have may be painfully deficient in pulpit ability. A good prayer meeting, like love, "hides a multitude" of pastoral faults. A congregation has a sort of instinctive realization of when a Church is doing well, and even the worldly ones do not like to take the risk of seeking a change.

Thus God has linked the successful conduct of the most necessary service of the Church to the duration of the pastoral term, as though in appealing to the natural desire on the part of the pastor for a long term of service he would thus make it doubly important to develop and maintain a vigorous prayer meeting.

The pastor should magnify his prayer meeting and seek to get a large attendance, because he needs the opportunity thus given to counsel and instruct his people. There are many duties and many phases of Christian experience that the pastor cannot possibly have time or occasion to mention in the pulpit, even though he preach twice on Sunday. Yet these things are very much needed, and the people will suffer without them. There is no place so suitable for this instruction as the prayer meeting. Let it accordingly be emphasized by the pulpit and pew.

III.

GETTING READY.

"ANYTHING that is worth doing at all is worth doing well." The best security against a poor prayer meeting is thorough and wise preparation upon the part of the leader—the pastor. Too many have the idea that just anything will do for the prayer meeting. There is a vast difference between "saying something" and having "something to say." The people are very sure to set no higher estimate on the prayer meeting than the pastor does, and they will judge his estimate of the service by the degree of preparation which he makes for it and which is invariably revealed in his talk or address.

The wise pastor will prepare as carefully for his Wednesday night service as for his Sunday morning sermon. I do not mean that the preparation will be as elaborate or the theme as stately and as fully discussed, but that in his own mind the service will have approximately the same rank, and he will strive just as earnestly to be ready with a brief address suitable for a prayer meeting as he does to be ready on Sunday morning with a sermon suitable for that occasion. And let all remember that prayer meeting talks that are worth hearing are not picked up on the way to the service. They do not grow on trees nor lie about loose on the sidewalks.

Moreover, helpful prayer meeting addresses are not simply short sermons. A sermon is one thing, a wise

prayer meeting address is another. It should not be as formal as a sermon. There are literally hundreds of subjects and phases of Christian experience, life, and duty that cannot ordinarily be presented in preaching, but can be and should be in the prayer meeting. The best idea of the class of subjects which I think are appropriate for prayer meeting can be obtained in that part of this little book which is given to a review of subjects actually used by me during two given years. In selecting scriptures and subjects for prayer meeting there must be a constant dependence upon the Holy Spirit in prayer. He knows what the people need, and will lead us to those lines of talk that we can use to the best advantage.

The wise pastor studies his people, knows something of their condition, and seeks to help them. In his Scripture-reading and in all other studies, as well as in pastoral visiting, he constantly has them in mind. Then if he is frequent and earnest in prayer for divine guidance, he is not likely to have much poverty of subjects.

In a general way I would say that the expository method of dealing with Scripture will probably yield the best results for the prayer meeting. The people know very little Scripture, and greatly need to have it read and opened to them by judicious exposition. Only he should be careful not to read very long lessons. Read and explain brief passages, mixing the reading and the explanation so as to hold interest. But the Scripture, with subject and address, is not all on which the pastor should be prepared. *Let him select all the hymns* before he goes into the presence

of the congregation. I say "let him select them." Do not leave this to the organist or choir leader. As far as possible let the hymns be in line with the general sentiment of the talk to be made. Very few singing people know anything about selecting appropriate songs. Alas! many preachers do not. Let the songs be selected and set down by number on a slip of paper in the pastor's hymn book before he begins the service. This should be done to avoid delay and awkwardness. Always be ready to announce a hymn number *instantly* when a song is finished or when rising from prayer. For the leader to pause a half minute or more while he fumbles through the book looking for a suitable hymn occasions not only an awkward delay, but shows to the people that the pastor is not the master of the books he most needs to use. At once, without their even saying it to themselves or recognizing it, they lose a measure of respect for him in his office.

As far as possible, the whole programme of the meeting should be thought out in the pastor's mind before he goes into the room. Of course this will frequently be subject to modifications and alterations because of the absence or presence of certain persons. But if the pastor knows in a general way what he will say and do first and whom he will call on for certain service in the meeting (such as the reading of a hymn or Scripture passage), it will prevent any slowness or confusion.

While this programme should be in the pastor's mind, it should not be hard and fast. What the prayer meeting must have is elasticity. Let the leader

watch every indication, and be ready to take advantage of everything that points the way the Spirit is leading. Sometimes it is well to have a set programme printed and distributed through the congregation, and of course to adhere to it. This will not be often, however, and need only be done to give a pleasing variety to the order of services, or when for any reason it is desired to introduce a number of people into the service for solos, quartets, or talks on particular subjects. In any and all events, let full preparation be made beforehand—and made every time.

IV.

THE LEADER.

THE success of the prayer meeting depends more upon the leader than upon any other one person—yes, more than upon all the other persons present combined. A poor leader will defeat an otherwise good prayer meeting, while a good leader will overcome many defects in the meeting, and will bring success out of what might have been miserable failure.

Speaking generally, *the pastor ought always to lead the prayer meeting.* He is the only man who naturally could be supposed to be so burdened with a sense of the importance and responsibility of the prayer meeting as to be in a suitable frame for its leadership. It may be well enough on occasions when extra prayer meetings are appointed for special purposes, or in cottage prayer meetings, to have laymen or persons other than the pastor to lead them, but the regular midweek service of the Church ought always to be led by the pastor. It may be said that the prayer meeting is a meeting for prayer, and therefore any one can be the leader. I answer that that is only a half truth, or rather it is only half of the truth.

The prayer meeting is a meeting for prayer, but it is more than that. It is a regular meeting of the Church which is primarily for prayer, but it is also a time for definite instruction on many things which can be brought forward only at such a time. Moreover, there is a certain spirit of song that ought to be

cultivated, there is a spirit of *church* unity that must be emphasized, and a social side that needs to be looked after. The regular midweek prayer meeting has come to be a function of the Church—of a given congregation—and by just so much it is more than a company of believers gathered for spiritual exercise and enjoyment only. To be sure, it is all that, and more. The company of believers in search of spiritual edification and manifestation ought to be there, and to be ministered to; but unless all phases are considered, and all classes welded together by judicious conduct of the meeting, it will not be long until the service will be uninteresting, if not insipid.

For these reasons, and others, the pastor alone is properly qualified to lead the meeting. In his absence he may use the best layman he has, or some brother minister, but *never when he is at home.*

Just at this point it may be noted that some good-intentioned pastors are led into an error by a mistaken idea of ministerial courtesy. There are local or superannuated preachers in the congregation, or some brother pastor or connectional officer, it may be, is passing through the town, and, as they ought to do, they attend prayer meeting. Immediately the pastor, thinking that courtesy demands, invites such a brother to lead the meeting. Alas! very few have grace and judgment enough to decline. What follows?

The meeting is probably led by a brother who does not know three people who are present, and who is entirely ignorant of their spiritual needs. But he has, or imagines he has, some reputation to sustain, and he gives in outline the best sermon he has, and

which is so arranged that it would suit equally well for a commencement or a camp meeting. And the poor sheep! they look up and are not fed. They do not know it. They think they have been fed; but, sad to say, they have only devoured chaff and filled themselves with the east wind.

What should be said of those pastors who are so little impressed with the importance of the prayer meeting, and are so indifferent in their preparation therefor, that they hail with joy every ecclesiastical tramp that comes along, and do not hesitate to put him or her up to lead the prayer meeting? Such pastors ought to consider again the vows they took when they entered the ministry.

It was my good fortune in one of my pastorates to have one of the bishops of the Church in my congregation at intervals for a period of over two years. When at home he always came to prayer meeting; and though he was deeply spiritual and much beloved by the people, I did not once ask him to lead, and that for the reason that he was not acquainted with the spiritual or other needs of my people, and was not responsible to God for them. Likewise, I once had in my congregation for four years a prominent connectional officer. He always came to prayer meeting, and in my absence frequently led for me. I never asked him to lead when I could be present. God has charged the pastor with the spiritual welfare of his people, and he dare not transfer his opportunity to others.

V.

WHO SHOULD PRAY?

One thing that helps to make some prayer meetings dull and uninteresting is the fact that the leader does not use discretion as to who leads in prayer. On the supposition that the pastor is the leader, as we have strongly advocated elsewhere, it is to be noted that *he should rarely, if ever, pray in the prayer meeting.* A moment's reflection will show the reason for this. He comes before the congregation at least twice every Sunday in public prayer. Prayer by the pastor in the congregation ought to be helpful, uplifting, instructive, enlarging. It ought to be full of God, full of the spirit of holiness, full of tenderness, comforting to those who are cast down, strengthening to those who are tempted, and breathing hope to the discouraged. In proportion as he is gifted in prayer, all this will follow with more or less fullness. His prayers will come to be valued as spiritual food by his people as much as or more than his sermons. To see this exemplified, read the marvelously beautiful and uplifting prayers offered by the late Dr. Joseph Parker on Sunday morning in City Temple, London.

Now, speaking in no improper sense (for the law of impression holds in spiritual things as well as in other matters), if the pastor leads in prayer on any and all occasions, his tones, ideas, and phrases become so common that they are *commonplace,* and then one of his chief means of helpfulness to the great congrega-

tion is lost by overfrequent use. If heard occasionally, the hallelujah chorus in Handel's "Messiah" stirs us mightily; but if we heard it every day, it would soon lose its power to move us.

Another reason why the pastor should not often pray in the prayer meeting is because there is not time for him to do so, and also for others who need this form of exercise to have the opportunity for praying. The prayer meeting is the place by preëminence for developing the gifts of prayer in the laymen—young and old, men and women. They need to learn to pray for their own benefit, and for the good of the congregation. If the pastor takes up the time by praying himself, he cuts out one or two lay brothers, or two or three good sisters, who ought to have this form of spiritual exercise. The pastor does not need it. He preaches, leads the meeting, prays on Sunday. But the others get no chance to exercise their souls in spiritual things except an occasional prayer in the prayer meeting. Please do not rob them of this privilege. Of course they are willing for him to do it—indeed, would protest if they were informed beforehand that they would be called on. So my little girl would be willing for her teacher to work all of her examples in arithmetic. But the wise teacher will not do it, and insists that the child do it herself. After a while the child will see why, and will thank the teacher.

Not only should the pastor ordinarily refrain from leading in prayer himself: he should not use only a certain three or four laymen for this duty. All the laymen need to pray in public. True, all will not

take part, but by wise effort many can be induced to do so, and it should be the constant aim of the pastor to increase the number who will respond to such a call. There is a way to do this, which is referred to elsewhere.

Just as the pastor will have to decline to invite visiting ministers to lead his prayer meeting, so he must be very careful about calling on preachers to pray in his meeting. Sometimes it happens that there are from two to five local, superannuated, or other resident ministers in a congregation. Of course they generally pray well, and the pastor feels inclined to call on them rather than on some halting layman. But this will not do. He is not sent there to develop these preachers. They are already strong Christians. They are prepared to pray in the great congregation at the close of the sermon, when a weak-voiced layman could not be heard. It will not do to use them in the prayer meeting, and thus give the laymen no chance. Besides, many of these good ministerial brethren will pray so long and so stately that the prayer meeting is robbed of its sweet simplicity.

The best way to manage a situation of this kind is at the beginning of a pastorate to state publicly that the prayer meeting is especially for the Church, the men and the women of the local congregation, and that resident or visiting ministers are earnestly desired to attend the prayer meeting, but will very rarely be called upon to lead in prayer. If the pastor states that he himself refrains from leading in prayer because he wants to develop others, then the ministers who are present will not be offended. Let

every one see that the sole purpose of the prayer meeting is to do good, and the ground for criticism is gone. While we should never be discourteous, and there should be thoughtful consideration for all, still he who in the conduct of religious services is moved by any lower motive than doing good and glorifying God is but tethering himself and setting a snare for his own feet.

VI.

SECURING AN ATTENDANCE.

It might be well enough to inquire what number of people constitute a well-attended and successful prayer meeting. Of course the answer will depend to a great extent on the number of Church members and the average size of the congregation. What would be a very poor prayer meeting attendance in some places would rightfully be estimated excellent in others. In a village or small town, where the Church membership is not more than one or two hundred, a prayer meeting attendance of twenty-five to forty might be considered good; whereas an attendance of that number in a city Church, with a membership of six hundred to one thousand, would indicate that the Church was greatly lacking in spiritual life and slowly dying.

Occasionally we hear of some popular city pastor who has a prayer meeting attendance of three to five hundred. This may be true, but I have never seen it so. Moreover, I question very much if the best results can be obtained in a prayer meeting that numbers three hundred people. Of course the lecture of the leader will bear fruit in any sized congregation—the more the better for that feature of the service. But really the lecture is only a small part of a well-conducted prayer meeting. One of its chief benefits is the opportunity that is afforded the pastor in training his members, especially the young ones, in public prayer and testimony. Where there are three hundred

people this cannot be properly done in the limited time that is given to a prayer meeting. Besides, young persons unused to public prayer are almost sure to pray in so low a tone that two-thirds of the people could not hear in a hall large enough to seat three hundred people. The result would be that the leader would form the habit of calling on a few ministers who might be present, or on gifted laymen, to do the praying. Their prayers would be good, but the timid ones and the young ones who needed the training would not get it.

Our conclusion is that from one hundred to one hundred and fifty is quite as many as can be utilized and profitably trained in a prayer meeting. It is better to have two prayer meetings of one hundred and fifty each, than one of three hundred. To secure a good attendance, several things are necessary.

First of all, the prayer meeting must be made attractive—in the talk that is given, in the songs, in the number that take part, and in the general conduct of the meeting. We cannot expect the people to come if the service is dull and heavy, and the spirit of those who take any part at all appears as though they do it from a sense of duty and not pleasure. Everything must be cheerful, sunny, prompt, and with a sufficient variety to be pleasing. Just as many as possible must be induced to take some part other than singing in the meeting. There is much suggestion in the remark of an old brother as he came away from prayer meeting one night after he had made a short talk: "Somehow we always have a good meeting when I take part." So thinks nearly every one.

Then the way to do is to get as many as possible to contribute to the meeting either by a prayer, a testimony, a short talk, the reading of a verse of Scripture or a hymn, or in some other way that identifies them with the service in a public manner.

In securing a good attendance much depends on the frequency and manner of announcement of the prayer meeting from the pulpit. In this day, when it is customary for some layman to make the announcements, if the pastor does not himself speak of the prayer meeting, and that too in an earnest and striking manner, he need not expect the people to come. An announcement that "we will have the usual prayer meeting" is to serve notice beforehand that it will be a tame affair. Always seek to make the impression that it will be an *unusual* prayer meeting. Never admit to yourself or the congregation that you are going to have an ordinary service. Always insist that it will be good, and that those who stay away will miss something. I once knew a pastor to urge the people to attend the "weekly" prayer meeting, "spell it," said he, "either way you choose." Of course it was "weakly" following such an announcement.

The pulpit reference to the prayer meeting must be in all phases. Sometimes there should be an enforcement of the duty of attending the prayer meeting, with reproof for neglect of this duty, but there should *never be scolding*. Avoid that as you would shun miasma. It is fatal to all good. There will need to be entreaty, but above all things hold out the idea that they will miss a good thing if they stay away.

Occasionally call attention to the inconsistencies of people in going to other places and neglecting the prayer meeting. Point out to the women that they should not house-clean or visit on Wednesday afternoon, lest their strength be all consumed and they be not able to attend prayer meeting. Women have not much strength; and if they use it all up in something else on Wednesday, they cannot attend prayer meeting. Let them see that it is a religious duty to keep themselves in good condition for the midweek service. By calling attention to this from time to time I have noted many women change their customs in this respect, and become regular attendants on prayer meeting when before they scarcely ever came.

It will be especially helpful if, from time to time, the subjects of the prayer meeting talk can be announced. Especially will this plan be good if the topics are a little out of the ordinary, and if there is a series of two to four of them, following each other in regular order, and all announced at once and repeated from week to week. Just what I mean by this will appear in the topics which were actually used by me, and which are given elsewhere in this book.

It is sometimes a good plan to use the town paper to call attention to the prayer meeting when for some reason it is to be of an unusual character. By printing the programme in the paper you arrest the attention of some who would not otherwise hear of it, and by use of the types that have already been set the printer can give you as many slips as you need, and thus every person present can be furnished with a programme of the meeting. This gives variety to

the exercises and diversifies the manner of conducting the meeting. Keep out of the ruts.

Sometimes a congregation is so indifferent to the prayer meeting that it seems nothing will arouse them. In such cases a plain, kind, strong personal letter, printed in typewriter characters and personally addressed and signed, sent to one or two hundred who ought to attend, will do great good. I have known such a method to succeed where all others had failed.

Then it is a good plan to have skeleton programmes of the next three or four prayer meetings printed and handed to the people on Sunday morning. The pastor who would get his people to prayer meeting must have the matter on his own heart, and must continually pray for some method that will draw the people out. "Have salt in yourselves."

The following letter was used by me in seeking to arouse an interest in the prayer meeting in the pastorate to which this book relates. It was personally addressed and signed with pen, and sent to more than one hundred people under a two-cent stamp. It never pays to send such communications as a circular—under a one-cent stamp and unsealed. This particular letter did much good, and the improved attendance was quite marked.

Will you suffer a word of kindly remonstrance, exhortation, and entreaty from your pastor? If so, please read this letter very carefully not once but several times, and then make the subject of it a matter of real prayer to God—as I have done before writing you.

And please remember that it is written not in a spirit of complaint or fault-finding, but in the spirit of Hebrews xiii.

17, which says: "Obey those that have the rule over you, and submit to them; for they *watch in behalf of your souls,* as they that *shall give account;* that they *may do this with joy,* and not with grief; for this were unprofitable for you."

I do not hold the office and work of pastor of my own seeking. I came to this work, and to my present Church, by the appointment of God. Finding your name on the Church register, and knowing that you are under a solemn obligation taken in the presence of the people to attend "upon the ordinances of the Church and support its institutions," I naturally feel much interest in you, and am very desirous to help you spiritually to the utmost of my power.

For this purpose, I earnestly ask you to be regular in attendance upon the prayer meeting. Possibly you have not been attending at all, or perhaps very irregularly. It may be that you have fancied that you are so situated that you cannot come. Or you may have had a sort of vague feeling that the prayer meeting is not for you, but for other people.

Whatever the cause that has made you neglect this service or attend irregularly, I ask you to wake up and *develop a conscience* on this subject. If God has given me power to instruct and help the people, then those who neglect the prayer meeting miss one-third of the help the pastor has for them. Honestly, before God, will your excuses for frequent or constant neglect of this service, think you, be accepted by the all-seeing Holy Spirit?

As pastor I put my best thought and effort into the prayer meeting, seeking to make it helpful to all my people, and it is not immodest in me to say that I sincerely believe that if you will attend regularly for six months you will find yourself greatly benefited. The prayer meetings are not dull. The singing is hearty, the prayers are earnest, the Scripture lesson useful, the talk instructive and spiritual, and the service short.

Please conserve your strength and time so as to regularly attend the prayer meeting.

Do not house-clean or visit Wednesday afternoon. Save yourself for the prayer meeting.

Do not invite company for Wednesday evening. If you have callers, tell them you are bound to attend prayer meeting.

Do not attend some social function Tuesday evening, and sit up so late that you are too sleepy to attend prayer meeting Wednesday evening.

Think of these and other things that have been keeping you away. Remember that the Bible says: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of Jehovah negligently."

VII.

SOME OVERLOOKED POINTS.

THERE are usually some little things upon which the final and complete success of any work depends, and yet these matters are so very small that we are apt to overlook them. It is so with the prayer meeting. There are a number of minor matters that, if properly regarded, will add in no small degree to the general effectiveness and enjoyment of the meeting.

Chief among these is the size of the room where the meeting is held, and the grouping of the audience near the preacher. It is quite unfortunate to have to hold a prayer meeting in a room that will seat two or three times as many people as attend. Most modern churches are being so constructed as to provide a moderate-sized room that can be used for both Sunday school and prayer meeting. This is as it should be. Where the prayer meeting has to be held in the regular audience chamber of the church, special effort should be made to seat the people close to one another and well to the front. Then let the leader take his position not in the pulpit but just inside the chancel rail; or if the distance between the front pew and the chancel is considerable, let him stand outside the chancel and as near to the congregation as possible. The subtle currents of spiritual influence that ought to emanate from the leader will not leap across a great dead space that stretches between him and his hearers. Get near to them if you would find the point

of vantage. Henry Ward Beecher declared that he attributed half his reputation as a preacher to the fact that he had his audience so packed around him that he could almost touch those on the front seats.

Again, the leader of the prayer meeting should *never sit down from the time he enters the room until the meeting is over.* Let him keep on his feet every moment. It is awkward to sit down while the congregation sings or some one talks. You can look over your audience better, tell who is there, know whom to call on for prayer, and command the whole situation better when on your feet than if you alternately stand and sit. When you stand, it is much easier to induce the long-winded brother to stop talking than if you sit. If you are up and moving a little uneasily either toward or from him, he feels that the floor is yours and that he must not claim it too long. But if you are sitting down, he has a sort of feeling that the floor is his, and that he must entertain the people indefinitely. Besides, for the leader to sit down looks to the company as though he is tired and is lacking in the snap and vitality to maintain the interest in the meeting.

On the other hand, never require the congregation to stand while they are singing in the prayer meeting. The reason for this is obvious. Most of them have been on their feet all day, and are tired. To have them standing during most of the songs is an unnecessary tax on their strength, and should be avoided. Then we wish to free the prayer meeting from the formalities of the more stately service. To sit and sing throughout the service, till perhaps the last song,

gives a free and restful feeling to the meeting that would be lessened if we followed the plan of some good brethren who seem to think that their capacity for leadership is demonstrated by the frequency with which they have their audiences "rising and falling."

The length of the service has much to do with its effectiveness. It is customary to give only one hour to the prayer meeting, and many do not hold it over forty or forty-five minutes. Now and then some one can give only thirty minutes to this most important service. This is a great shame, and will inevitably result in a barren and unsatisfactory service.

The prayer meeting should never be less than an hour, and the wise leader will find it necessary to often go beyond this—sometimes to an hour and twenty or twenty-five minutes, but more frequently to about an hour and ten minutes. Just because we have gotten a notion that we must hold the prayer meeting only an hour, or less, we not infrequently close the meeting just as we reach the point where spiritual good is coming to us. *We cannot force the Holy Spirit to come to our terms or time.* To have a rigid rule that we will close when sixty minutes have gone is to betray either our ignorance of the Spirit's methods or our indifference to his work. Frequently the ten or fifteen minutes beyond the hour have gone by so noiselessly that we were oblivious of their flight, and constitute the very best part of the prayer meeting, and which would have been lost if we had held to the hard and fast rule of sixty minutes. In none of this do I mean to advocate long prayer meetings. My own rule for years has been to hold for one hour, but

I have never been specially careful about it except during the very short and very warm nights in midsummer. In the fall and winter and early spring my prayer meetings frequently exceed an hour by ten or fifteen minutes. The truth is that a spiritual impression and spiritual frame cannot be ordinarily secured in a prayer meeting congregation under about an hour. When the meeting opens, the people are just from their business or other engagements, and very few of them are in a spiritual frame. The first two or three prayers are cold, formal, halting. But gradually as the prayers and songs proceed the fervor rises, until by the time the pastor has made an earnest talk of from fifteen to twenty-five minutes there takes place a sort of amalgamation and melting process, and during the prayers and songs that follow every one is conscious that the real prayer meeting is being enjoyed.

Hardly anything perhaps needs to be said on the subject of music for the prayer meeting. All recognize its great importance. Familiar songs should be used. Have them selected beforehand, so there will be no delay, and so you will not call for something that cannot be sung. Any instrument helps, but personally I much prefer a piano. There is a cheerfulness about it that is not in the solemn-toned organ, and that makes it specially suitable to the prayer meeting.

The meeting should be opened exactly on time. The only way to get prompt attendance is to begin on time to the very minute. It is as easy to train people that way as any other, and to train them to know

that promptness has a very beneficial effect on their character generally, while slovenliness in beginning helps to make them slovenly in all their religious life. "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently."

VIII.

FEELING MY WAY FOR THREE MONTHS.

We come now to a presentation of the Scriptures and topics actually used during a period of two years in one of my pastorates. These topics are not given because I think they are ideal or superior to similar topics used by other brethren, but because it is in keeping with my plan to present the actual prayer meeting experience for a period sufficiently long to test methods; and by following the record made at the time we shall be able to see the difficulties that from time to time confront the prayer meeting, and how those difficulties were measurably overcome. Moreover, I have been impressed for years with the paucity of themes and topics used in many prayer meetings; and as I am writing for young men in the ministry, I have a hope that by giving the topics used and the general line of discussion followed *in a prayer meeting that steadily grew* they may find suggestions that will help them in after life.

When I entered upon this particular pastorate, I found an excellent class of people living in easy walking distance of the church. The church building was a fine one, and admirably adapted for all the church services, having an excellent room separate from the auditorium for prayer meeting purposes. The people were cultured, and not specially worldly. I found afterwards that for the most part they were formalists, knowing but little of real spiritual life, and not well

informed in the Scriptures. This I did not know at the beginning, however; and as everything seemed favorable, I supposed we would have a splendid prayer meeting. For the first three months I had simply to feel my way. The prayer meeting was thoroughly disappointing. I was at a great loss to know what Scriptures to read or what subjects to discuss. There seemed to be almost no response in my audience when I mentioned spiritual things. Under these circumstances I found great difficulty in selecting suitable lessons. I did not know the exact spiritual state of my people, and hence could not decide what things to use. In this situation I adhered very closely to the practical life of a Christian as brought out in the Epistles, especially the Epistles of St. Peter.

My notebook reveals the following record:

OCTOBER 14.

Present, 65. Scripture, James i. 1-10.

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

8 A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

The body of the talk was on:

(1) The paradoxical statement that to the Christian trials and temptations are grounds of rejoicing, because

(2) They develop patience, and patience when completed produces a character that is "perfect and entire, lacking nothing;" and

(3) The willingness of God to grant help to those who lack wisdom.

The occasion was pleasant, save that one or two persons declined to pray.

October 21.

Present, 58. Weather, good.

I expected an increased attendance, but instead had a decrease. One of the oldest members of the Church was present, a man nearly eighty years of age. After one or two others had declined to pray, I called on him; and though he had once held family prayer and was reputed to be a deeply religious man, yet he declined to pray on this occasion. By this time I began to see that a strange spirit of unwillingness to do anything in public possessed the people. So I did not read the lesson I had intended, nor any lesson; but, moved as I thought by the Holy Spirit, I proceeded to

give a most earnest talk on the duty of prayer and testimony. During the talk one brother arose and declared that from then on he would pray whenever called on. I went home feeling that a beginning had been made, but that I had a hard pull before me.

October 28.

Present, 85. Weather, splendid. Scripture lesson, Psalm xxxiv. 1-10.

1 I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
2 My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.
3 O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.
4 I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.
5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.
6 This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.
7 The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.
8 O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.
9 O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.
10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.

Thinking that maybe my words the preceding week on the duty of prayer and testimony had seemed a little strong to persons who were evidently so poorly prepared for this form of Christian duty, I decided to bring them a message of softness from the Psalms.

My talk was such as would naturally be drawn from the verses read, taking them verse by verse. The spirit of the meeting was good. A few responded to the request to lead in prayer, including one or two women.

NOVEMBER 4.

Present, 46.

The small attendance was partly due to a big church wedding in a near-by church, occurring just a few minutes before the prayer meeting. That man will deserve to be canonized in Protestantism who will discover some way to prevent people from selecting the prayer meeting night for church weddings. Christian parents ought to have better judgment. Sometimes, however, young people fix on that night without consulting parents or even the pastor. Twice in my pastorates I have had young people who were arranging to marry set the date for Wednesday night at the prayer meeting hour and issue cards, without even mentioning the matter to me as pastor. In one case I refused to allow the use of the church, and in the other persuaded the parties to delay it for an hour until the prayer meeting was over. In both cases the parties were outside my own congregation. Had they been members of my congregation, I would have been forced to yield, and thus see my prayer meeting lost; or, objecting, feelings would have been hurt and damage done. The wise pastor can help to prevent such things by letting it be known as soon as he enters upon a charge that he sets so much store by the prayer meeting that he will not allow it interfered with by anything short of an absolute necessity.

At this particular service I began a series of talks on the First Epistle of Peter, and read and discussed 1 Peter i. 1-3:

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The treatment presented:

(1) To whom the Epistle is addressed: Strangers throughout the whole wide world, hence to us.

(2) The means of election: Sanctification wrought by the Spirit, and cleansing through the blood of Jesus.

(3) To such "strangers," separated ones, cleansed and sanctified, "grace and peace be multiplied."

November 11.

Present, 56. Weather, good.

The preceding night a reception to the pastor had been held in the same room. That gathering had a damaging effect on the prayer meeting. Any sort of gathering that touches the main body of a congregation will damage the prayer meeting, especially if held on the night immediately preceding the prayer meeting. Many people either cannot or will not go out

two nights in succession, so that it is wise always to prevent congregational assemblings on Tuesday night if possible.

The Scripture for this night was 1 Peter i. 4-7:

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

The discussion was on:

(1) The imperishable inheritance for those

(2) Who are *kept by the power of God;* and

(3) The constant "rejoicing" of the Christian through sanctification.

(4) In heaviness through manifold temptations.

(5) The blessed result of the trial of our faith.

November 18.

Present, 33. This was a very cold night, and a big church wedding in the church the night before helped also to diminish the attendance at prayer meeting.

The Scripture lesson was 1 Peter i. 13-25:

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.

24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

25 But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

The talk was poor, not worth outlining; about equal to the crowd.

November 25.

Present, 65. This was an unfavorable night, but an exhortation the Sunday before had a fine effect, and the attendance picked up. The meeting was excellent.

Scripture lesson, 1 Peter ii. 11-25:

11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

17 Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

The talk was mainly from the different verses, taking them one at a time. It is a fruitful lesson, especially that part of it which relates to the spirit and patience of Christ under ill treatment.

December 2.

Present, 56. The weather was good, and the spirit of the meeting fine; but again the attendance dropped, and that without any known reason.

The lesson was 1 Peter iii. 1-7:

1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

The talk was on "The Two Toilets," seeking to show in what the true adorning of a godly woman consisted.

DECEMBER 9.

Present, 45. This was an unfavorable night, but the service, while poorly attended, was fine in spirit. In one respect the small attendance had a good result: it gave me a better chance to call on and get young and timid people to pray. During these first three months much of this was done, and many made their first attempt to pray in public.

In getting persons to pray in public, some skill is necessary. I doubt if it is generally wise to ask them beforehand. A better way is to take it for granted that all Christians will perform this duty. Then, as the call to prayer is made, state: "We will have three short prayers. Brother S— will lead first, Brother T— second, and Brother U— will conclude." By beginning with a person that you are pretty sure will lead, the next one gains confidence while the first one is praying; and having the prayer concluded by a man who is in the habit of public prayer also helps the timid one. Nearly always this plan will succeed. Sometimes it is well enough to say: "We will now have two or three short prayers from some of our sisters, and they will please lead us as follows." In this way one strengthens another, and a prayer is offered by persons that would not think of doing so if called on by themselves.

The Scripture lesson was 1 Peter iii. 8-12:

8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

DECEMBER 16.

Present, 48. The weather was good and the service excellent, but the attendance was again poor. For some reason, which is not given in my notes, no Scripture lesson was read at this service, but the hour was given to testimony, singing, and prayer.

DECEMBER 23.

Present, 35. The weather was good; but, as the date shows, it was just two days before Christmas, and, as is well known, the spirit of Christmas hilarity ill comports with the religious earnestness of a prayer meeting.

On this particular occasion my own heart was full of a sense of God's goodness, so that I drew my talk from the four following beautiful statements of God's Word, and which I had noted in my own devotional Scripture-reading:

"His favor is for a lifetime." (Ps. xxx. 5. R. V.)

"My times are in thy hand." (Ps. xxxi. 15.)

"Yet the Lord thinketh upon me." (Ps. xl. 17.)

"This I know, that God is for me." (Ps. lvi. 9. R. V.)

It can be seen at a glance how comforting these passages are to a Christian.

IX.

MINISTERING TO RECOGNIZED NEEDS.

THREE months in my new pastorate had gone by. They had been to me three months of disappointment, of perplexity, and of some little encouragement. I had found it necessary to feel my way very carefully. I could not exactly determine the spiritual status of my people, and hence I did not know just what things to insist on. I relied for the most part on general lines of instruction, and cried incessantly to God for help and direction. As the new calendar year opened, I felt that I began to get a new and better grasp on the situation, as I trust will be revealed in the better line of prayer meeting topics from this on.

JANUARY 20.

Present, 59. Weather, good.

This was a fine service. My notebook does not contain any account of the prayer meetings from December 23 until January 20. I suppose I was out of the city, and hence no record. Thinking that I had discovered in my congregation a lack in the greeting and welcome of strangers, I determined to make it the subject of a prayer meeting talk, and accordingly for this occasion announced as my theme: "Looking after Strangers; or, The Power of Social Christianity." The scriptures used were:

Also thou shalt *not oppress* a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.—*Exodus xxiii. 9.*

And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt *love* him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.—*Leviticus xix. 33, 34.*

Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.—*Deuteronomy x. 19.*

At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: and the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall *eat and be satisfied;* that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.—*Deuteronomy xiv. 28, 29.*

And thou shalt *rejoice* before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to place his name there. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes. Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: and thou shalt *rejoice* in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates.—*Deuteronomy xvi. 11-14.*

Let not a widow be taken into the number under three score years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have *lodged strangers,* if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.—*1 Timothy v. 9, 10.*

In the talk emphasis was placed upon the words, "not oppress," "love," "eat," "rejoice," "lodged

strangers," as embodying the attitude that Christians should have toward strangers who come in to worship with them. An instance was referred to of one good man I had known who nearly always carried some stranger home to dine with him on Sunday. This he was especially careful to do if the stranger was a young man. Other cases were given to show what could be done by a warm welcome to the church and a little kindly hospitality.

JANUARY 27.

Present, 50. Weather, fair and cold. Service, good. The scripture used was 1 Corinthians i. 1-4:

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

3 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.

These verses afforded an opportunity to talk of:

(1) Paul's right to speak and our duty to hear him —he was an "apostle."

(2) To whom he wrote—the church, the sanctified, and to "all who call upon the Lord," hence to us.

(3) His benediction on them—grace and peace from the Triune God.

(4) His concern for them—"I thank my God always on your behalf."

Of course the object I had in view was to illustrate and enforce the rightful pastoral authority of the true minister and the corresponding obligation on the people to hear and be led by him. This sense of reverent respect for pastoral authority and leadership is very weak in some congregations—made so also by ministers who are unworthy their high calling. Until this feeling is established among a people, they may regard the pastor as the "voice of one who has a lovely song," but they will not obey his words.

February 3.

I was absent from this service; out of the city. It was led by a layman. It is a good plan to occasionally invite a layman to lead the prayer meeting when the pastor is out of the city. But always deal fairly with your congregation by telling them the previous Sunday that you will be absent, and that Brother So-and-So will lead. Urge them to come just as though you were going to be there. By doing this way you will not disappoint them, you will aid the brother who is to lead and save him from embarrassment, and add dignity to the service. The people will feel that you regard it as important, seeing you are not willing to leave without making provision for its proper conduct. To publicly announce that a certain brother will lead a particular service is always a great help. No man likes to appear before an audience to lead a meeting on what seems to be his own motion. Let him have the indorsement of a public notice that he will lead.

February 10.

Present, 40. Good service. Subject: "Abraham Interceding for Sodom." Scripture, Genesis xviii. 23-33:

23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

26 And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:

28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

30 And he said unto him, O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

32 And he said, O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

33 And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

This was the first of several prayer meeting talks on the general subject of intercessory prayer. I was planning to begin revival services, and was seeking to show my people the value of prayer for others, and to try in some measure to beget in them the spirit of prayer.

FEBRUARY 17.

I was again absent, assisting in revival services elsewhere. This service was led by a layman.

FEBRUARY 24.

Present, 38. Splendid service, though the attendance was mortifyingly small. The scriptures read were Exodus xxxii. 7-14, xxxii. 31-34, and xxxiii. 1-23. The first passage only is given here:

7 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:

8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

9 And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

11 And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the moun-

tains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.

14 And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

This subject and talk, as before stated, was to impress the great value of intercessory prayer.

March 2.

Present, 30. This was a very cold night, and by some mistake the sexton did not have the room warm. I soon saw that the people could not afford to remain long in the room without endangering their health, and so after a very brief service they were dismissed.

The subject was: "A Church at Prayer under Great Difficulties." Scripture used, Acts xii. 5-12:

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

Following this the revival shortly began, and lasted three weeks, resulting in a blessing to many souls and putting new life into the prayer meeting. From first to last during the revival I insisted *over and over again* that a religion that was indifferent to prayer meeting would never be vigorous and was lacking in saving power.

Six months of my first year in this pastorate had gone by. I had been present and kept a record of sixteen prayer meetings, and the record showed that the average attendance was only fifty. From this on, however, the attendance was much improved, as the record for the next six months will show.

April 6 and 13.

Present April 6, 80. Present April 13, 75. For these two prayer meetings the subject was the same: "Praise." The first night did not suffice to exhaust it, and so it was continued for the next week.

This subject was chosen because I had found in my congregation a strong indisposition to public testimony. In many there was positive refusal, and in some a little showing of ridicule. The subject proved very interesting and instructive. Many scriptures bearing on "Praise" were read, too many to be quoted here.

After showing that God desires us to praise him because he has the heart of a father, and cannot be satisfied till there is *intelligent response* to his love, and such response implies expression, the following phases of the subject were presented:

(1) The scriptural obligation to praise God. (Ps. lxix. 30-32, lxxiv. 21, cxlv. 1, 2; 1 Chron. xvi. 36; Joel ii. 26; Isa. lx. 18.)

(2) In what praise consists: (*a*) Its root meaning is to "break out in a cry, especially of joy." The prominent idea is *noise*. (*b*) Thanksgiving is one of the most important and simplest forms of praise, and its absence is a note of heathenism. (Rom. i. 21.) (*c*) Singing is a prominent form of praise, too well understood to need discussion. (*d*) Exclamations or ascriptions of praise are common in Scripture. (Luke ii. 13, 14, xix. 37, 38; Matt. xxi. 9; Rev. vii. 10.)

(3) Where to praise: (*a*) In some sense everywhere and all the time. (*b*) More especially in God's house and in the assembly of the saints.

(4) For what to praise: (*a*) For forgiveness; (*b*) for healing—health; (*c*) for redemption from destruction; (*d*) for loving-kindness and tender mercies—all the good things of life; (*e*) for the satisfying of the soul—spiritual supplies.

April 20.

Present, 48. Weather, bad. Subject: "How God Answers Prayer." Many people believe that God hears and answers prayer, but few take note of the natural ways, the prevenient grace, the providences and seeming accidents by which it is done. This hour was given to a sort of object lesson study drawn from the Scriptures, showing how God does answer prayer.

The particular case considered was St. Paul's almost lifelong desire to visit and preach in Rome, and his request to the Roman Church to join with him in prayer to that end.

The following was read:

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.—*Romans i. 9, 10.*

For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.—*Romans xv. 22-25.*

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.—*Romans xv. 30-32.*

In these quotations, in addition to the apostle's strong desire to visit Rome, it will be noted that he calls upon the Church at Rome to join with him in prayer for these things:

(1) That he might be delivered from those who did not believe in Judea—*i. e.,* malignant Jews who would seek his injury.

(2) That the offerings which he bore from the Gentile converts at Corinth might be accepted by the poor Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

(3) That he might ultimately reach Rome, and with them be refreshed.

We shall see how God answered all these prayers, and especially the first one as to his personal safety, by a series of interferences and most remarkable deliverances. His first answer was in the form of shutting a door in his face. The apostle had intended to begin his journey to Jerusalem by setting sail from Corinth, but certain malignant Jews of that city formed a plot against him. They perhaps thought that they could get their hands on him and kill him about the time he was taking ship. In some way he heard of this, and to their confusion changed his plans and went by land, leaving of course unexpectedly to them.

> And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, and there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.—*Acts xx. 2, 3.*

God next helped him by giving him notice beforehand that trouble awaited him.

And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.—*Acts xx. 22, 23.*

When he reached Jerusalem, he received the answer to the second petition of his prayer, as is shown in the following:

And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.—*Acts xxi. 17.*

His next deliverance was from a violent mob which sought to take his life, as appears from these words:

Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.—*Acts xxi. 26-32.*

The devil seemed to be using every agency possible to destroy Paul; and having failed with the mob, he

aroused the council, from which turbulent body God also delivered his servant.

And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.—*Acts xxiii. 7-10.*

At this juncture God saw that his faithful apostle needed a special comfort, and so in the darkness of the night, doubtless while he was in prayer, he gave him the assurance that he would yet reach Rome.

And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.—*Acts xxiii. 11.*

His next deliverance was from the oath-bound mob. It is altogether probable that these wicked Jews had no thought that any Jew in all that great city who was not a Christian would expose their plot. But God had one of Paul's blood relations—a nephew—who, whether he was a Christian or not, did not want to see his uncle disposed of in this way. God always has some one ready to serve his purpose.

And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they

were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to-morrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him. And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me? And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly. But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me. And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Cæsarea, and horsemen three score and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; and provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.—*Acts xxiii. 12-24.*

Then came what must have been a very puzzling experience to the apostle: he was kept in prison for two years. During the time he had a testing from the Lord, brought about by a very adroit temptation of the devil.

It was this: He had a chance to *buy himself out of prison.* How natural it would have been to say: "As I want to go to Rome to *preach the gospel,* and as God has assured me that I shall go, and as my imprisonment is all wrong and of the devil, and as I can do no good here and could do good in Rome, and my friends are willing to furnish the money, I will buy my way out and go on with the Lord's work." But not so. In effect he said: "Thou God of my life hast shut me up in this prison without any wrongdoing on my part, and here I will stay till the doors are opened by legal authority and rightful processes." All this can be read between the lines of the following quotation:

And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him. And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix's room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.—*Acts xxiv. 23-27.*

A little later he was saved, doubtless by the prevenient grace of God, from an influential friend who would have released him sooner than it was best.

Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar.—*Acts xxvi. 32.*

Then came the long and trying voyage to Rome, during which there were several remarkable deliverances. Once Luke and the others lost all hope, and God had to give his servant another special comforting assurance, as is seen here:

And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.—*Acts xxvii. 20-24.*

Following this he was delivered from the murderous purpose of the soldiers, and from the engulfing sea:

And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all to land.—*Acts xxvii. 42-44.*

Once more Satan sought to slay him, this time by a venomous reptile, but God delivered him.

And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us

every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.—*Acts xxviii. 1-5.*

Then after some further delay came Rome, and the prayer was answered.

And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome. And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum, and The three taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.—*Acts xxviii. 13-16.*

Of course there is entirely too much scripture quoted here to be read at a prayer meeting. Only the chief passages could be read, and the others spoken of. I have given it all here for the benefit of those who would like to make a careful study of the subject.

April 27.

Present, 65. Fine service.

Scripture, Philippians iv. 1-7:

1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

3 And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-laborers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

In the talk several things were mentioned at some length:

(1) The tender feeling of the apostle (and so every true pastor) for his flock, as we may see in such expressions as "dearly beloved," "longed for," "my joy and crown," etc.

(2) The fact that good women sometimes differ, and the need of harmony between them. (Verse 2.)

(3) The helpfulness of good women, and the duty of the pastor to encourage them. (Verse 3.)

(4) The possibility of rejoicing in the Lord "always." (Verse 4.)

(5) The Christian duty and privilege of avoiding anxious care. (Verses 6 and 7.)

During the month of May I was absent several prayer meetings attending to other Church work, and find no record for that month.

June 1.

Present, 65. Weather, fine.

Subject: "The Baptismal Formula." Just previous to this I had baptized several, both adults and infants. Having been impressed that but few people rightly understood the beautiful significance of the baptismal formula, I decided to make a talk on it at prayer meeting.

The scripture read at the beginning was Matthew xxviii. 1:

> 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

(1) This formula is slightly varied in Acts ii. 38, viii. 14-16, and xix. 5. In these places the baptism seems to have been administered in the name of Jesus only. The reason must have been that these persons were already Jews, and so were in the faith and covenant of God the Father, and hence only needed to affirm faith in Christ.

(2) Why is the given name used in baptism and not the surname? This is a puzzling thing to many people. (*a*) The surname is not our real name. It is only a family name, and is often derived from occupation, country, or some accident of residence. Thus Redford was probably "Reedy-ford," and was used to designate a certain man who lived near a reedy ford across some stream. (*b*) Given or Christian names have character in them, and were originally bestowed to designate certain well-defined traits in the individual, or certain characteristics that the par-

ents of the child felt divinely inspired to foreshadow by a name. Name really means nature, and an argument of some strength can be produced to show that to this day Christian parents are frequently led to bestow names on their children that indicate character. There was a fine opportunity here to give an interesting talk on the general significance of names, for which I had sought to prepare myself by a study of two or three works on names, but which cannot be introduced here.

(3) Attention was called to the fact that in the Revised Version the baptismal formula is *"into"* and not "in." Upon the supposition that this is correct, the question recurs, why? The answer is twofold, and, if we do not mistake, lends far more beauty and significance to the act of baptism than we have been accustomed to see. (*a*) The phrase "baptize *into*" the name of the "Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost" finds its first explanation in the fact that the converts from heathenism were to come from "gods" many and "lords" many to the *one true God,* and hence they must be baptized *into* his name. (*b*) Do not the Scriptures teach that in some mysterious but very real sense Christians are in the *family of God?* and if baptism is the outward sign of entrance to the kingdom, is it not proper that the formula should be *"into"* rather than "in," which is only equivalent to "by the authority of God I baptize you?"

The apostle uses very wonderful language in Ephesians iii. 14, 15, when he says:

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Of whom *the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*

See also Romans viii. 16 and Galatians iv. 6. In the foregoing I do not mean for a moment to teach baptismal regeneration. It is a mischievous doctrine that has wrought much evil. The thought in my mind is, that when a genuine believer receives baptism by a proper administrator, or when an infant is duly baptized at the sincere request of believing parents, the parties so baptized come, by virtue of that fact, under the *covenant mercies of God* in a sense which cannot be affirmed of the heathen or of other unbaptized persons. And thus we see again why the surname is not used. At baptism they obtain *a new family name.* Henceforth they are metaphorically, ideally, legally, "children" of God. O that all were really such! (*c*) The triune name is used in the formula to teach the Trinity.

June 8.

Present, 55. Weather, good.

Subject: "Christ's Slave."

(1) Attention was called to the fact that all through the epistles of Paul and Peter, where they refer to themselves as "servants" of Christ, the rendering should be, and is in the Revised Version, "bond servant," which means precisely the same as our word *"slave."* The idea in the minds of these great apostles was that they were slaves of Jesus Christ. (See Rom i. 1; Phil. i. 1; Tit. i. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 16; etc.) This idea of the relation of the Christian to Christ is

leagues in advance of the prevalent thought of to-day.

(2) The reason for this bond service: "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price." (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; vii. 23.)

(3) The spirit of their bond service—not constrained, but loving sonship. (1 Cor. vii. 21, 22; Eph. vi. 6.)

(4) The extent of their bond service—complete obedience, and an effort in all things to please God. (Gal. i. 10.)

JUNE 15.

Present, 80. Weather, perfect.

On this occasion, in place of the talk by the pastor, two good women just home from an Annual Meeting of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society gave us an account of their great meeting, producing a fine effect. It is always a good plan to utilize the prayer meeting in the interest of the foreign and home mission work of the women. It should be done, however, under the direction of the pastor. It must still be a prayer meeting, with the time usually given to his talk occupied by others, whose names and subjects he should select, or at least approve, beforehand. And they should be brought forward by him. If he abdicates his position and retires, leaving the women to direct the exercises, he will find that his prayer meeting suffers, though the people may not utter a word of protest.

JUNE 22.

Present, 80. Weather, ideal.

This service was given to reading and commenting

on the General Rules as laid down in the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It was a profitable hour.

June 29.

Present, 65. Weather, excellent.

The service was led by the presiding elder. Pastor out of the city.

July 6.

Present, 85. Weather, ideal.

Subject: "The Ten Most Important Chapters of the Bible."

Very few people have any just idea of what is fundamental or necessary in Christian doctrine. In order to bring out these things forcibly, I requested my congregation on Sunday morning to consider this proposition. Suppose an edict were issued by competent authority to destroy all the Bible except ten chapters, and you were given the privilege of selecting the chapters that were to be spared, which chapters would you choose? I requested them to hand in their written answers on Wednesday evening at prayer meeting, signed or unsigned, as they preferred. My object was to put them to thinking, and to impress on their minds the fundamentals in Christian doctrine. When the time came, quite a number of answers were handed in, some of which were reasonably good, but most of them wide of the mark.

I had previously placed on a blackboard the ten chapters that I would select, with my reason therefor.

At the proper time it was produced, and a brief talk given as to why these chapters were selected. Here they are:

Creation—Genesis, chapters i. and ii.
The Fall—Genesis, chapter iii.
Moral Law—Exodus, chapter xx.
Birth of Jesus—Luke, chapter ii.
Crucifixion—Luke, chapter xxiii.
Resurrection and Ascension—Luke, chapter xxiv.
Regeneration and Love of God—John, chapter iii.
Pentecost and Founding of Church—Acts, chapter ii.
Heaven—Revelation, chapter xxi.

July 27.

Present, 65. Impressive service.

Subject: "The Mystery of Early Death; or, The Worth and Loss of Little Children."

Just previous to this date I had been called to bury some little children and one or two infants. Noting the sorrow occasioned by the going of these precious little ones, I was led to believe that the subject of early death would be a profitable theme for instruction and comfort in a prayer meeting talk. The verse of Scripture read was Hosea ii. 15:

15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the days when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

Death is always a mystery, but in the old it is accepted as a matter of course, the wheels of life having run down. The mystery is increased tenfold when

the life ends in infancy or early childhood. Is there any relief? any blessing? any explanation?

(1) Its meaning to the subjects themselves: (*a*) They are saved from sin, from pain, from sorrow, and saved in heaven. (*b*) There they enter upon a life of uninterrupted development and service, which growth is not hindered and made difficult by the sinful experiences and memories of the earthly life.

(2) Its meaning to parents and near relatives. The lives of children who die young, however short they may be, enriches their parents' hearts and lives: (*a*) By softening their natures and awakening love. (*b*) This change of nature in the parent becomes more or less permanent through the power of memory. (*c*) Hence, better to love and lose than never to have had any to love. (*d*) Only by fatherhood and loss do we understand God.

(3) Their loss becomes a "door of hope" to the bereaved parents. (*a*) It brings them to lean on God. (*b*) It puts them to thinking of others.

The whole was illustrated by the account of three good women I have known who, because of the loss of a little girl in childhood, have each been led to educate a Chinese girl, and in this way have had their hearts turned to foreign missions and the saving of heathen women.

August 3.

Present, 75. Weather, perfect.

Subject: "God's Help in the Common Work of Life." Scriptures used were Exodus xxxv. 30-35, xxxvi. 1:

30 And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah;

31 And he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship;

32 And to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

33 And in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work.

34 And he hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.

35 Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.

1 Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the Lord had commanded.

From this was drawn the truth that just as God helped Bezaleel and the others in the engravings and other ornamentation of the tabernacle, so we should seek and expect to receive help in doing even the common things of life, if done in the work of the Lord and for his glory.

"If done to obey thy laws,
E'en servile labors shine;
Hallowed is toil, if this the cause,
The meanest work, divine."

August 10.

Present, 62. Weather, hot.

Subject: "The Pastor's Conflict." Scripture, Colossians ii. 1-10:

1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

From this was drawn a somewhat general talk on the real concern which every true pastor feels for the spiritual development of those under his care. Many people have no conception of this whatever, but think the pastoral office like any other position where a certain amount of service is given and so much pay

is received. A review of the real attitude of the pastor with St. Paul for an illustration is very helpful.

August 17.

Present, 58. Many people out of the city. In place of the customary Scripture lesson and talk thereon, I read them selections from "Ancient Sermons for Modern Times." These were preached by Asterius, Bishop of Amasia, more than fifteen hundred years ago. I had found them so full of gospel truth, and stated in such a fresh way, that I felt that my people would be profited by hearing certain sections. I wanted them to see the exact correspondence between real gospel preaching in the fourth century and the twentieth century. It was so much enjoyed that one lady decided to order the book for herself.

On August 24 and 31 I was out of the city, and the meeting was led by laymen.

September 7.

Present, 55. Many still out of the city.

Scripture read, Deuteronomy viii. 2-5:

2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

4 Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.

5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.

This afforded opportunity for a helpful talk on God's leading of his people, then and now.

September 14.

Present, 60. Weather, good.

Scripture read, Colossians iii. 12-17:

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Instead of a talk from the pastor, several persons gave us talks on the "religious benefit of their summer outing." It was a helpful service.

September 21.

Present, 65. Extra good meeting.

This being the closing prayer meeting for the Conference year, and having had an unbroken year of

harmony and good will, the subject chosen for this service was "Brotherly Love," and the opening scripture was 1 Peter iii. 8:

8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.

This was shown to be taught of God, 1 Thessalonians iv. 9, 10:

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.

Its character is seen in Romans xii. 10:

10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.

Its nature is shown in 1 Peter i. 22:

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.

Its degree is pointed out in 1 Peter iv. 8:

8 And in all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

On my record book I find this note: "Total attendance on thirty-two prayer meetings, for which there is record, 1,882. Average for the first sixteen meetings, 50. Average for the second sixteen meetings, 67.

X.

SIX MONTHS OF GROWTH.

October 5.

Present, 64. Good meeting. Scripture, Zephaniah i. 1, 2. This was the first meeting of the new Conference year; and while we had a pleasant service, there was not much in the scripture selected, and the talk was poor.

October 12.

Present, 67. Excellent service. Subject: "God as Revealed in the Nineteenth Psalm."

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.

2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.

3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

12 Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.

13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

(1) His glory in nature. (Verses 1-6.)

(2) His glory in character. (Verses 7-14.) (*a*) He manifests himself in law, and in testimony, or teaching. (Verse 7.) Precepts (R. V.) and commandments. (Verse 8.) Fear—*i. e.*, feeling inspired by God and judgment. (Verse 9.) (*b*) Character of manifestation: Perfect and sure (verse 7); right and pure (verse 8); clean and true (verse 9). (*c*) What these do: Restore (R. V.) the soul, make wise the simple (verse 7); rejoice the heart, enlighten the eyes (verse 8); endure forever, righteous altogether (verse 9).

October 19.

Present, 60. Good service. Subject: "Does Personal Work for Souls Pay?"

Scripture, John i. 35-46:

35 Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples;

36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

This subject was chosen in view of the fact that we were expecting revival services to begin in a week or two. Instead of discussing it myself, I invited short talks from several on the immediate thing that decided them for Christ. I have done this on several occasions, and have found that in nearly every instance the thing that finally decides people to come to Christ is not an eloquent sermon, but a simple personal appeal from friend or relative, or some Christian worker.

October 26.

Present, 67. Good meeting.

Subject: "Indebtedness of the Church in America to Revivals and Revivalists." The scripture read was Acts xi. 19-26:

19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the Church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

In view of the revival which was to begin in a few days, I had requested certain brethren to prepare and give us some account of Jonathan Edwards, Charles G. Finney, and Dwight L. Moody. Their talks were of much interest, and I followed with an earnest exhortation.

NOVEMBER 2.

I was called out of the city, and the service was led by a superannuated preacher living in the bounds of the charge.

NOVEMBER 9.

By neglect of the sexton the house was cold, and the service had to be shortened to only a few minutes. People cannot worship God with pleasure to themselves when they are cold, and it is very dangerous to sit in a room where the mercury is below sixty degrees. It is better under such circumstances to dismiss a congregation than to attempt to hold a service. On November 16, 23, and 30 the revival meetings were in progress.

DECEMBER 7.

Present, 84. Weather, cold.

This was the first prayer meeting after the revival, and it was turned into a testimony meeting, with fine results.

DECEMBER 14.

On the preceding Sunday I announced that the next several prayer meetings would be given to a consideration of this general topic: "The Relation of Certain Natural, Necessary, and Innocent Enjoyments to Spiritual Growth."

Accordingly, the topic for this night was "Eating and Drinking," and the scripture first read was 1 Corinthians ix. 25:

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

Some are asking: "Can such a commonplace thing as eating and drinking have any bearing on spiritual life?" Yes, all things have such a bearing, this subject perhaps more than some others.

(1) The Bible opens with the account of the fall of the race through eating—spiritual death through the indulgence of a natural, necessary, and innocent desire to eat. If the oldest information we have about the race indicates weakness at this point, we should beware. The first and second chapters of Genesis mention eating more than twenty times.

(2) What we eat becomes part of us, some making bone, some muscle, some blood, etc. Likewise, in some indefinable way, the soul is conformed to bodily measures.

(3) Eating and drinking is used nearly everywhere in Scripture to express a life that is forgetful of God. See the following:

Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.—*Amos vi. 3-6.*

And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and

drink; for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts. —*Isaiah xxii. 12-14.*

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.—*Luke xii. 16-19.*

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.—*Luke xvi. 19.*

Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.—*1 Corinthians x. 7.*

(4) We should use care in eating, that the body with which we are to glorify God be not injured, and that our minds be not dulled from surfeiting.

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.—*Luke xxi. 34.*

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.—*1 Corinthians x. 31.*

(5) There never was a time when the supply of food to all classes, at all seasons, was as generous as it is now; hence the more need to study this subject.

(6) Manner and amount of eating: (*a*) Not before the time—not irregularly; (*b*) not hastily and greedily; (*c*) not delicately or fastidiously—hard to please; (*d*) not too much.

I illustrated the needed mastery of our appetite by the great Dr. Finsen, of Copenhagen, the discoverer of the light cure for cancer, who for twenty years had to weigh his food to an ounce in order to preserve his life.

(7) Quality and nature of what we eat: (*a*) Not (but little, if at all) of rich and highly spiced foods and drinks; (*b*) not of that which is indigestible by us, however much we may like it or others can eat it.

(8) Where and when we eat and drink: (*a*) Not at irregular or unreasonable hours; (*b*) not constantly at hotels or boarding houses, *especially for families.*

This proved a very helpful and instructive theme; and while its bearing on spiritual growth is not direct, yet, being indirect, it is all the more necessary that young Christians be guarded against such an evil.

December 21.

Present, 72. Good weather.

My plans for this evening were interfered with at the last moment. A blind young man, claiming to be a preacher and touring the country to get money to complete his studies, begged the privilege of leading the service—that is, of making the talk. I did not like to consent, but the fact that he was blind appealed to me, and to refuse might have appeared as unkindness to a greatly afflicted man; and so, though I feared the service would be practically lost, I thought it better to err on the side of mercy, and gave way to him. The talk was fairly good, and being blind he attracted the attention of the people, so that on the whole there was perhaps not much loss.

December 28.

Present, 53. Christmas week.

Subject: "Dress." This was the second of the series on "The Relation of Some Natural, Necessary, and Innocent Enjoyments to Spiritual Growth." Among others, the following scriptures were read:

> And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.—*Colossians iii. 17.*
>
> If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.—*1 Peter iv. 11.*

The basic idea in all these talks was that *everything* we do must be done to the glory of God. It was sought to be shown that this applied not only to a man himself; but, if he is the head of a family, to his family also.

In considering dress we note:

(1) Its three designs: (*a*) To secure decency—that is, modesty; (*b*) protection, or comfort; (*c*) ornament, or adornment.

(2) In what way does it have any bearing on the spiritual life? (*a*) Dress should have regard to the canons of modesty, in not exposing the person, or wearing the garments of the opposite sex:

> The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.—*Deuteronomy xxii. 5.*

(*b*) It should eschew that lightness and gaiety in dress

which is clearly worldly. As an illustration of the silliness of much worldly dressing, and as showing how hateful it is to God, the following was read:

In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantels, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well-set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.—*Isaiah iii. 18-26.*

(*c*) It should exhibit neatness, good taste, economy, and sobriety in keeping with the Christian spirit. This is in accord with apostolic injunction:

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.—*1 Timothy ii. 9, 10.*

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands.—*1 Peter iii. 3-5.*

(*d*) It should not influence us in our attitude toward others in the matter of religion:

For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?—*James ii. 2-4.*

These various points were illustrated by incidents in my ministry, and certain customs of society as to dress were sharply rebuked. The interest was considerable, and I felt that good had been done.

January 4.

Present, 52. Weather, very cold. Subject: "Conversation." This was a continuance of the same general topic, as previously referred to. It was introduced by the following scriptures:

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. —*Matthew xii. 34-37.*

Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.—*Colossians iv. 6.*

The following is a brief outline of the talk for the evening:

(1) The word "conversation" is not used in the Bible in its present sense, but rather as referring to the whole life.

(2) Conversation both *reflects* and *develops* our inner nature.

(3) It is largely a matter of will, and can generally be controlled by prayer and forethought.

(4) The conversation to be specially guarded against is not that of business, but of times of relaxation, of social hours, and at table. The useless custom of "house parties" among young people, lasting days or even weeks, was used as an illustration of an excess of light, frivolous conversation that is almost necessarily damaging to the spiritual life.

(5) We should seek always to converse with those who are well informed and serious-minded. The case of Dr. John B. DeMotte, the renowned lecturer, was instanced. In his youth he was very reticent and given to hard study. He avoided the light company of his neighborhood, and when he did talk it was to serious and well-informed persons. The young people said that he was egotistic, and they laughed at him. Now they are unknown, while he has a Continental reputation.

(6) Christians should avoid much indulgence in lightness, and should introduce serious subjects. Attention was called to the general lightness of social gatherings, especially of ladies, where for hours together no serious word, either of knowledge or religion, is spoken.

(7) Conversation should not be very long.

As an appropriate close to this talk,, I read extracts

from Mr. Wesley's works, showing his views on conversation. Especial attention was called to his statement that very few persons can converse profitably more than an hour.

January 11.

Present, 40. Weather, extremely bad. In view of the conditions, the talk intended for this night was deferred. For a lesson Genesis xxxii. was read—the account of Jacob wrestling with the angel. Charles Wesley's incomparable hymn, "Wrestling Jacob," was also read, and the service was a good one.

January 18.

Present, 90. Weather, good.

Subject: "Sleep." This was a continuation of the same general theme before referred to—viz., "The Relation of Some Natural, Necessary, and Innocent Enjoyments to Spiritual Growth."

To begin with, the following scriptures were read:

> Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.—*Psalm xiii. 3.*
>
> His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.—*Isaiah lvi. 10.*

(1) The need of sleep—how much? (*a*) Children half the time; (*b*) adults one-third the time; (*c*) the very aged, little else but eat and sleep.

(2) Neither body nor soul can go well on too little sleep, a fact not recognized by multiudes. (Eccl. viii. 16.)

(3) The spiritual life is damaged from insufficient

sleep, because of (*a*) nervousness; (*b*) lack of capacity for consecutive and concentrated thought; (*c*) irritability and general unpleasantness.

Not a few otherwise good people mortify their friends by an irritable disposition, which would largely disappear if they would take sufficient sleep.

(4) An error of some is in sleeping too much: (*a*) It damages business:

> Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler. Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that traveleth, and thy want as an armed man.—*Proverbs vi. 4-11.*

(*b*) Overindulgence in sleep renders our spiritual tone flabby and fiberless. (*c*) Read extracts from Wesley's works showing ill effects of too much sleep.

January 25.

I was out of the city. For the next two weeks revival services were in progress in the church.

February 15.

Present, 26. Weather, desperately bad.

Subject: "The Missionary Idea in the Hebrew Race."

This study proved so interesting to me that it was afterwards elaborated into a sermon. The outline is too long for insertion here.

February 22.

Present, 61. Favorable weather, but much sickness in congregation. Subject: "The Book of Jonah and Its Missionary Lessons." This also proved of much interest, at least to the pastor, and grew into a sermon.

March 1.

Present, 85. Good weather.

Instead of the regular prayer meeting, a Church Conference was held.

March 8.

The meeting was held by a local preacher, in the absence of the pastor.

March 15.

Present, 87. Excellent meeting. Subject: "Gems from Deuteronomy." I had frequently noticed in reading the book of Deuteronomy that it contained many of the most tender and beautiful statements of God to be found in the Bible. So with the double view of directing the attention of my people to this supposedly uninteresting book, and also to comfort their hearts with some of the tender words of the Lord, I read and commented on the following:

> And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, *as a man doth bear his son,* in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place.—*Deuteronomy i. 31.*

In connection with the above was read:

As one *whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you;* and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.—*Isaiah lxvi. 13.*

Then again:

He doth execute *the judgment of the fatherless and widow,* and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.—*Deuteronomy x. 18.*

Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the Lord thy God *turned the curse into a blessing* unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee.—*Deuteronomy xxiii. 5.*

That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: *for he is thy life, and the length of thy days:* that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.—*Deuteronomy xxx. 20.*

And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, *thy days approach that thou must die.—Deuteronomy xxxi. 14.*

Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; *and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.—Deuteronomy xxxiii. 25.*

These are all beautiful and precious promises, and the last one can be understood to mean that just as our days of trial, days of temptation, days of work, days of hardship, or days of age and infirmity, *so shall thy strength be.*

March 22.

Present, 80. Good weather.

Subject: "Paul's Thorn." (2 Cor. xii. 1-10.) This scripture is so familiar to all that it is not repeated here. My mind was drawn to a study of it by a personal experience of a peculiar kind through which I was passing.

In studying it the following is the general line pursued:

(1) When was the wonderful revelation to which he referred received? It might have been received at one of three occasions: (*a*) At his conversion; (*b*) at his vision in the temple (Acts xxii. 17); (*c*) at his stoning at Lystra (Acts xiv. 19, 20). The revelation itself was certainly glorious, but to us it is purposely left vague.

(2) What was the "thorn in the flesh?" Four suggestions have been offered: (*a*) Ophthalmia, a disease of the eyes; (*b*) epilepsy; (*c*) malarial fever; (*d*) injuries received at the time of his stoning. Whatever it was, he evidently thought that it would interfere with his activity and usefulness as a preacher, and hence his desire for its removal.

(3) The divine object in allowing it to remain was to secure Paul's humility: (*a*) Humility, the most important of graces; (*b*) spiritual pride very dangerous, and liable to the holiest.

(4) His prayer for deliverance, and the Lord's reply.

(5) His glorying in weaknesses, in injuries, etc.

This service closed my third period of six months in this pastorate, during which the average attendance at prayer meeting had been seventy-one. For the next two prayer meetings I was away conducting revival services.

XI.

CONTINUED GROWTH.

I FELT very much encouraged in entering upon the fourth period of six months. There had been steady growth in the other three periods, and I determined, if possible, to make this one the best of the four.

APRIL 12.

Present, 65. Weather mild.

Subject: "Unique and Helpful Sayings from Jeremiah."

In a previous prayer meeting we had studied certain tender passages from Deuteronomy. With that service I was so much pleased that I determined on a similar study of the book of Jeremiah. I wanted also that my people should see that there are many exquisitely beautiful statements of truth in a book that they had considered specially dull and hard to read.

The divine watchfulness was shown in this:

> Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will *hasten my word* to perform it.—*Jeremiah i. 11, 12.*

The effect of sin in making people so obdurate that they cannot blush at the commission of even the grossest sin is seen in this:

> Were they ashamed when they had committed abomina-

tion? nay, they were not at all ashamed, *neither could they blush.—Jeremiah vi. 15.*

That sin will lead men to extremes beyond even the thought of God is seen in this:

And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, *neither came it into my heart.—Jeremiah vii. 31.*

That the very birds of heaven respond to God more than intelligent man, his child, is seen here:

Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but *my people know not the judgment of the Lord.—Jeremiah viii. 7.*

The weakness of man and the ability and willingness of God to direct him are shown here:

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is *not in man that walketh to direct his steps.—Jeremiah x. 23.*

Sometimes a people may become so sinful as to be beyond the reach of interceding prayer. Witness the following:

Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind *could not be toward this people:* cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.—*Jeremiah xv. 1.*

Death comes to some at the least expected moment:

Her sun is gone down *while it was yet day.—Jeremiah xv. 9.*

The preciousness of God's word to the true Christian is shown in this:

Thy words were found, and *I did eat them;* and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.—*Jeremiah xv. 16.*

April 19.

Present, 83. Good service.

Subject: "Some Benefits of the Prayer Meeting."

Scripture read, Acts iv. 23-35:

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

(1) It is a place for the free consideration by those of like mind of matters pertaining to the progress of the kingdom. (Verse 23.)

(2) A place where each helps the other by united prayer. (Verse 24.)

(3) A place where special prayer is made for the undergirding of the pastor with divine help. (Verse 29.)

(4) A place where the enduement or filling of the Holy Spirit comes in answer to prayer. (Verse 31.)

(5) It results in giving the preacher great power in witnessing to the truth of the resurrection, or any other truth. (Verse 33.)

(6) It produces the spirit of oneness and helpfulness. (Verse 34.)

April 26.

Present, 87. Fine weather.

In place of the customary prayer meeting, we had an address on a missionary topic by a neighboring pastor. This was one of three addresses on such topics on consecutive nights.

MAY 3.

Present, 80.

The pastor was absent, and the meeting was led by the Y. M. C. A. Secretary.

MAY 11.

Present, 125.

By special appointment and announcement, a returned lady missionary addressed the audience. The congregation was partly made up from other Churches; and so in making up the average for this six months I reckoned this evening at only ninety, believing that that would have been the attendance of my own people on prayer meeting.

About this time, feeling that my people needed to have their interest in the prayer meeting quickened, and desiring a full hearing on the things I wished to say, I had printed and distributed on the pews before Sunday a four-page folder. It was a neat and attractive folder. It never pays to advertise by slovenly printer's work. In addition, special attention was called to the folder from the pulpit. It was as follows:

L. OF C.

(Page 1.)

A GOOD SUMMER RESORT.

THE

LECTURE ROOM

OF THE

—— STREET METHODIST CHURCH.

EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING,
EIGHT O'CLOCK.

(Page 2.)

SKELETON PROGRAMS

OF THE

NEXT FOUR PRAYER MEETINGS.

GENERAL TOPIC: "THE GOSPEL FOR THE HOUSEHOLD."

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17.

SUBJECT: "HOW TO HAVE GOOD SERVANTS."

Scripture: Genesis xxiv.

One or more numbers by the male quartet: A, C, J, K.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 24.

SUBJECT: "THE DAUGHTER IN THE FAMILY."

Scripture: Ruth i.

After remarks by the pastor, some mothers present will express themselves as to how a mother can win her daughter's confidence, the character of reading a daughter should do, company she should keep etc

(Page 3.)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 31.

SUBJECT: "A SERVICE OF SONG—THE OLD HYMNS OF OUR PARENTS."

Scripture: Psalms cxxxvii. and cxlix.
The old songs that our fathers and mothers used, some almost forgotten, will be either sung or read.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7.

SUBJECT: "SOME GOOD BOOKS I HAVE RECENTLY READ."

Scripture: 1 Timothy iv. 6-16.
Three-minute talks about good books recently read, by Mr. ————.
(Here followed the names of eight or ten leading brethren and sisters.)

(Page 4.)

The following beautiful poem was written nearly three thousand years ago. It is contained in an old and much-neglected book, known as the Bible, and will be recognized by Bible readers as the one hundred and twenty-second Psalm:

I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go unto the house of the Lord.
Our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem;
Jerusalem, that art builded as a city that is compact together:

Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord,
For a testimony unto Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.
For there are set thrones for judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
They shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls,
And prosperity within thy palaces.

For my brethren and companions' sakes,
I will now say, Peace be within thee.
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God
I will seek thy good.

May 17.

Present, 71. Good weather.

Subject: "How to Have Good Servants." Scripture, Genesis xxiv. 1-27. This passage shows the beautiful relations existing between Abraham and his servant Eliezer. It is too long for insertion here. The following is a brief outline of the talk on this occasion:

Four things impress us in this account:

(1) The superior position of Eliezer, implying his trustworthiness and Abraham's confidence in him—he "ruled over all he had."

(2) This is further shown in that he intrusted him with the selection of a wife for his son.

(3) Eliezer was a deeply religious man, as can be seen in several places in this chapter.

(4) There was friendliness and dignity, but not familiarity on Abraham's part, and mutual confidence in their relations

Rules for securing and keeping good servants:

(1) Give good wages and pay promptly.

Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: at his day thou shalt give

him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.—*Deuteronomy xxiv. 14, 15.*

Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.—*Leviticus xix. 13.*

(2) Do not require *too much* work of them; give them some time to rest.

(3) Treat them with kindness, but not familiarity.

(4) See that the children treat them kindly and respectfully, and not with rudeness.

(5) Show interest in their religious welfare.

May 24.

Present, 81. Fine service.

Scripture: Selections from the story of Ruth. Subject: "Ruth's General Bearing." Illustrating the model daughter and the wise mother.

(1) There was affection and devotion:

And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them,

and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.—*Ruth i. 14-20.*

(2) She deferred to her mother's judgment in the matter of exposing herself outside the home:

And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.—*Ruth ii. 2.*

And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law.—*Ruth ii. 22, 23.*

(3) She was modest and retiring:

And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: and let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.—*Ruth ii. 14-18.*

(4) She wanted to help; she did the hard and humiliating work of gleaning.

And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight

I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. —*Ruth ii. 2.*

So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.—*Ruth ii. 17.*

(5) Such a daughter is honored of both man and God:

So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? —*Ruth i. 19.*

And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.—*Ruth ii. 11.*

And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest; for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.—*Ruth iii. 11.*

(6) Her mother was thoughtful of her in that which would constitute her daughter's highest happiness—marriage to the man she loved:

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?—*Ruth iii. 1.*

(7) All Ruth's devotion to her mother-in-law grew out of her love for the true God, which Orpah did not have:

And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law. And

Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.—*Ruth i. 14-17.*

May 31.

Present, 90. Specially good service.

Subject: "A Service of Song—The Old Hymns of Our Grandparents." In the daily afternoon papers a full programme of this service was printed, and slips of this notice were distributed at the door as the people entered, and served as "programmes." These slips were as follows:

The prayer meetings at the Methodist church for the month of May have been on the general topic of the "Gospel for the Household." They have grown very interesting. Wednesday night of this week will be given to a unique service of song, in which many old hymns, some of them long since forgotten, will be either sung or read. In addition, Dr. Lloyd will exhibit some old hymn books never before seen in this city.

The following is the programme in full for Wednesday evening:

1. Reading Psalm cxxxvii. 1-6.
2. Singing—Hymn Book, 505.
3. Prayer.
4. Psalm cxlix. 1-6. Mr. ———.
5. Singing—Hymn Book, 902.
6. Prayer.
7. Singing—Hymn Book, 917.
8. Exhibition of old hymn books, including a facsimile reprint of the first Methodist hymn book ever printed, and also Mr. Wesley's hymn book, published one hundred and seventeen years ago.

9. Reading—"The Preacher's Farewell," from song book known as "Songs of Zion."

10. Singing—Hymn Book, 839.

11. Prayer.

12. Singing—Hymn Book, 871.

13. Reading of a fine old song, long since forgotten, known as "The Happy Sailor."

14. Singing by Mr. N. B. ———, of No. 42 in "Select Melodies," and also No. 501 in "Songs of Zion." These are old songs once very popular, but entirely unknown to the present generation.

15. Singing—No. 546 in Hymn Book, and concluding prayer.

JUNE 7.

Present, 63. Good weather.

A near-by church wedding hindered the attendance. Subject: "Some Good Books I Have Recently Read." Scripture, 1 Timothy iv. 12-16:

12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

13 Till I come, *give attendance to reading,* to exhortation, to doctrine.

14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

There were short talks by several touching good books they had recently read, but the service was not satisfactory.

June 14.

Present, 58. Weather, very warm.

This service followed immediately an Annual Meeting of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Conference. It closed just an hour or two before the prayer meeting was held; and having been in session for several days, my people were very much worn, and not in good condition for attending prayer meeting.

As appropriate to the occasion, this subject was chosen: "The Obligation of Prayer in Connection with Missions."

(1) For laborers—missionaries—and for the growth of the spirit of missions.

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.—*Matthew ix. 36-38.*

(2) For the missionaries themselves:

And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.—*Ephesians vi. 19.*

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.—*2 Thessalonians iii. 1, 2.*

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.—*Romans xv. 30.*

Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the

gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.—*2 Corinthians i. 11.*

(3) For the heathen themselves:

I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.—*Isaiah lxii. 6, 7.*

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.—*1 Timothy ii. 1.*

June 21.

Present, 60. Hot weather.

The prayer meeting habits of the congregation had been seriously disarranged by the Woman's Foreign Missionary meeting held the week before. Scripture, 2 Chronicles xv. 1-15:

1 And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded:

2 And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

3 Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

4 But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.

5 And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries.

6 And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity.

7 Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.

8 And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the Lord, that was before the porch of the Lord.

9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.

10 So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.

11 And they offered unto the Lord the same time, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.

12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;

13 That whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.

14 And they sware unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.

15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about.

The talk was mostly on the last four verses.

June 28.

Present, 93. Fine service.

Subject: "Double-Mindedness; or, The Danger of Unchristian Alliances." Scripture:

And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Should-

est thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord. Nevertheless, there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.—*2 Chronicles xix. 1-3.*

And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly: and he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber. Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.—*2 Chronicles xx. 35-37.*

(1) Some account of Jehoshaphat's excellencies, also his foolish alliance with wicked Ahab, when he had no quarrel with the Syrians.

(2) He returned in peace—that is, not wounded, and not pursued by the victorious Syrians.

(3) Jehu's manliness in rebuking him.

(4) God objects to alliances with the wicked because: (*a*) It weakens us in our antagonism to sin; (*b*) it justifies wrongdoers in their course.

(5) Three forms of alliances with those who hate God that Christians should avoid: (*a*) Business; (*b*) social; (*c*) matrimonial. Social life is all right when it is an incident of other meetings, but should be carefully scrutinized when we attend or give social functions for their own sake.

(6) The form which the wrath of God took in Jehoshaphat's case: (*a*) Invasion of the land and shipwreck of his fleet; (*b*) evil to his posterity.

July 5.

Present, 75. Weather, warm.

Subject: "God's Three Coöperating Agencies in Religious Enterprise." Scripture, Ezra v. 1-5:

1 Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them.

2 Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.

3 At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?

4 Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?

5 But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter.

The following points were treated:

(1) Haggai and Zechariah, *prophets,* stirred up the people to rebuild the temple. So all religious enterprise or progress has to be urged and carried forward by the preachers. This is what preachers are for, and people ought to demand just such preachers.

(3) As Zechariah and Jeshua, *leading laymen,* took hold of the work, so now such laymen must be enlisted before much can be done.

(3) There was opposition on the part of Tatnai and his secretary. So there are always those who oppose

every forward movement. Sometimes this opposition comes from within the congregation.

(4) They appealed to Darius, the *Civil Governor* of the State, and got protection. So religious enterprise needs the strong arm of the State to give it security and peace. Illustrated by present condition of France, where Protestantism has no protection from the State.

For the next four weeks I was away, partly resting and partly conducting revival services.

AUGUST 9.

Present, 60. Profitable service.

Subject: "Jesus Mastering a Great Difficulty through Prayer." Scripture, John xi. 33-42:

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he *groaned in the spirit,* and was troubled,

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

38 Jesus therefore *again groaning in himself* cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes. and said, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.*

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

The object of the talk was to show that even Jesus, when confronted with the necessity for a great work, could not accomplish it without recourse to prayer. In this case, on his way to the grave he "groaned in spirit"—that is, he prayed mightily, but the only outward sign was his groaning. When he reached the grave he seemed to pause, and again he "groaned" the unutterable prayer. Having doubtless the inward assurance that his prayer was heard, he commanded that they take away the stone. After some little parley, this was done. Then Jesus openly returned thanks to his Father for the answer that he was assured he already had to his prayer expressed in "groaning," and which answer the people realized a moment later when they saw Lazarus come forth from the tomb.

August 16.

Present, 76, Fine service.

Scripture, Hebrews xii. 4-13:

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

The burden of the talk was on the fact and certainty of God's chastening his children, and the spirit in which it should be received. Attention was called to the exquisitely beautiful thought of the writer, that absence of chastisement is a proof of illegitimacy, while chastisement proves sonship. The "bastard," or illegitimate, boy roams the street day and night, a terror to all, unchastised and therefore uncorrected, because forsooth to chastise him would be to assume responsibility of fatherhood to him, seeing that none but a father has the right to chastise. It follows that to be without chastisement is to prove that we are not true sons of God.

August 23.

Present, 89. Excellent service.

Subject: "Blessings Cursed." Scripture, Malachi ii. 1, 2:

1 And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you.

2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and *I will curse your blessings:* yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.

The complaint here is against the priests primarily, but really against all. Some things they did not "lay to heart" and glorify God for. For this failure he threatens to "curse their blessings."

I.

Our Chief Blessings.

(1) A well-formed and healthy body, and a sound mind.

(2) Enough income to provide the necessities of life, with some of its comforts, and perhaps a little to lay up for a rainy day.

(3) Social, educational, and religious advantages, etc.

II.

How We Fail to "Lay Them to Heart."

(1) When we are puffed up, and do not recognize their source.

(2) When we are not duly humble and properly thankful for them.

(3) When we do not use them *chiefly* for our own *spiritual good,* and for others as well.

III.

How They Become Curses.

(1) As to our bodies, we pander to our appetites till they master us, and we yield to low and sensual

things instead of rising to the nobler. Instance, the rich fool. Also, a boy I once knew who debased his splendid body by cigarette-smoking until he was a nervous and mental wreck, and would pawn his clothes and steal to get money for cigarettes.

(2) Yielding to love of possessions, we become selfish, sordid, grasping, lose fine moral distinctions, and come to be execrated of men—thus our "blessings are cursed." Examples: Iscariot, Rockefeller.

(3) By failing to use aright our social, educational, and religious advantages our spiritual nature is dwarfed, devotion becomes a form, joy disappears, and those around us, being of the same type, are powerless to help us.

August 30.

Present, 63. Good service.

Subject: "Turning a Curse into a Blessing." Scripture, Deuteronomy xxiii. 3-5:

3 An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever:

4 Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee.

5 Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee.

See also Nehemiah xiii. 1, 2.

The subject for the previous week, "Blessings Turned into a Curse," led me to speak of the opposite, a curse turned into a blessing.

I.

What Is a Curse?

(1) A malediction by bad men or devils. Balaam cursing Israel. The devil afflicting Job.

(2) Disappointment of plans, so that poverty, partial or complete, results.

(3) Afflictions in the form of injured or diseased bodies, or in the loss of loved ones.

(4) The curse of God, due to persistent sin or folly, as in Esau's case.

II.

How a Curse Can Be Turned into a Blessing.

(1) God *only* can make such a transformation.

(2) As to maledictions, he goes before and prevents. Balaam *could not* curse.

(3) In some sense such a transformation is effected by what are called natural means, notably through the imagination. The crippled boy and the maimed soldier can neither one walk, but the one in imagination chases birds and outruns butterflies, while the other enlivens his gloomy moments by painting the victories he could win if he had a leg instead of a crutch.

(4) Curses are turned into blessings by cheerful resignation to the divine will. Instance, Joseph, Job.

(5) In many instances curses become blessings by working all we can for ourselves and others. Helen Keller's case is a striking illustration of the turning of the most awful curse into a blessing. Her own life is not only cheerful, but her example of work under the most conceivable disadvantages has inspired many another to effort. In a recent article she uttered this

fine sentence: "There is no one so imprisoned or maimed that God has not a bit of work somewhere for that soul to do."

(6) God turns our curses into blessings by making them the means to higher things. Fanny Crosby, the blind hymn writer, and Beethoven, the deaf musician, doubtless achieved their high positions of honor, usefulness, and enjoyment largely because they were shut off from the outer world.

SEPTEMBER 6.

The pastor was out of the city. This and the three succeeding prayer meetings were damaged in attendance by reason of a great semiunion revival meeting held under a tent and conducted by a noted evangelist.

SEPTEMBER 14.

Subject: "Jehovah's Blessing Maketh Rich."

Scripture, Proverbs x. 22:

The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

The subject of "blessing" became so fixed upon my mind that I decided to continue its study for another service.

(1) "Rich" is a relative term implying possessions, money, or the having of those comforts and enjoyments that "riches" are *supposed to command.*

(2) "Riches," as ordinarily acquired, or even if inherited, usually have a sting, or some "sorrow" accompanying them.

(3) The text declares that the "blessing of God maketh rich"—that is, secures to us the blessings that

money is supposed to confer, and yet leaves no sting or "sorrow" behind.

(4) This blessing of Jehovah is: (*a*) *Salvation,* which makes one "rich" indeed. (*b*) It is the natural blessing of contentment, fostered by grace. Not the contentment of laziness, but the contentment of simple desires, with relief from consuming ambitions. (*c*) *Trustfulness*—that is, confidence in God, and quiet waiting on him. (*d*) A gentle manner and spirit, sanctified by grace, is an inestimable blessing from God.

Illustrated by the story of Rev. Mr. C——, who, though poor, yet by the "blessing" of God was given by a rich parishioner a trip to Europe and the Holy Land, thus securing to him the comfort that money affords, and that without even the "sorrow" of taking care for the money.

September 20.

Subject: "Praying in the Spirit." Scripture read:

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for *we know not* what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.—*Romans viii. 26, 27.*

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the Spirit of man, which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.—*1 Corinthians ii. 9-11.*

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints: and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.—*Ephesians vi. 18-20.*

Four kinds of prayers were mentioned:

(1) The prayer offered by the man who is in *trouble* —who is driven to prayer because of threatened danger.

(2) The *formal* prayer, either read or repeated.

(3) The *ordinary* prayer in public, either family or private, which may be more or less earnest.

(4) The prayer in the Spirit. This sort of praying we are led to offer by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it is only expressed in sighs and groans, at other times it is more formal and particular, and is generally accompanied by a strong persuasion that the answer is certain. Indeed, the fact that we are moved to pray by the Spirit is a sort of assurance beforehand that our petition will be granted, for "he maketh intercession for [or through] the saints, according to the will of God."

During this term of six months I was present at nineteen prayer meetings. The last two, however, were during the revival meetings under the tent before referred to, which so cut down the regular prayer meeting congregation that these two are not taken into consideration in making up the average. For the other seventeen nights the average attendance was 75. It had steadily risen during each period of six months

—50—67—71—75. How much my methods and the subjects discussed had to do with this steady increase, I am unable to say. If there is any good in them, I offer praise to God. If any brother receives from this little book a suggestion that will help him, that will be additional cause for thanksgiving.

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